District Review Report
Final

School District No. 51 (Boundary)

May 5 - 7, 2003

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair

Dick Chambers, Superintendent SD No. 57 (Prince George)

School District No. 51 (Boundary) Review Report

District Name:	Boundary
District Number:	51
Superintendent:	Denny Kemprud
Date of Visit:	May 4-7, 2003
Team Chair:	Dick Chambers
Team Members:	Frank Dunham Diane Forsyth Dennis Hugh Elaine Viel Nancy Walt

Context

The Boundary School District is a small district comprised of ten schools. It is located in south-central British Columbia covering 8,000 square kilometers. It takes 3 ½ hours to travel from one end to the other.

The district was amalgamated in 1996, merging Kettle Valley and Grand Forks School Districts. Since that time, the district has been dealing with a declining student enrolment of 14-18% annually. Currently, there are 1,800 students enrolled in the district of which 98% are English speaking and 2% are ESL. There are approximately 200 students who self-identify as aboriginal, however, there is no band associated with the region.

In general, there are a larger proportion of families with annual incomes under $30,000 as compared to the provincial average. In addition, a lower proportion of the population hold either a high school graduation certificate or a post-secondary degree as compared to the provincial average. However, it is important to note that there are smaller numbers of single parent households as compared to the provincial average.

In 2002, the board elected four new trustees and three incumbents. The school district organization is considered "flat" and "lean", comprised of a superintendent and a secretary-treasurer. This leaves decision-making responsibilities with individual schools.

The school district has incorporated community-integrated services into a number of school sites. In the 2002-2003 school year, the district implemented a 4-day school week. Early reports from students, parents, and staff are positive.

Summary of Process

List of meetings attended, schools visited, groups interviewed:

- Trustees, Administrators, Superintendent & Secretary Treasurer
- Superintendent & Trustee Representative
- Five Parent Advisory Chairs
- Grand Forks Secondary School Administrators
- Dr. D.A. Perley Elementary School Principal and Teacher Representative
- John A. Hutton Elementary School Principal, Teacher Representatives & Parent Representatives
- Greenwood Elementary School Principal, Teacher Representative & Parent Representatives
- Boundary Central Secondary Principal & Vice Principal, Teacher Representative & Parent Representatives
- Midway Elementary Principal & Vice Principal, Teacher Representative & Parent Representatives
- Beaverdell Elementary Principal, Teacher Representative & Parent Representatives
- West Boundary Elementary Principal, Teacher Representative & Parent Representatives

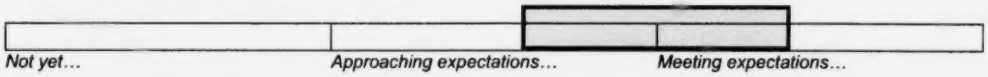
The Team met with the Board at the conclusion of the second day to provide an overview of their observations to that point and debriefed the Superintendent on the morning of the third day.

Additional data considered:

- School Performance Reports (as produced by the Ministry of Education)
- Grade 2, 4, 5 & 6 Achievement Data
- Satisfaction Survey Results from the Ministry of Education
- District Accountability Contract
- School Improvement Plans

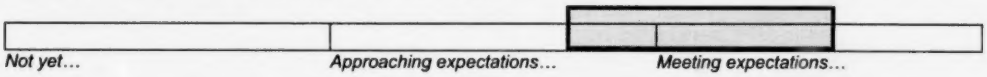
Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. Goals:
   Improving districts have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in clear goals for improving student learning.



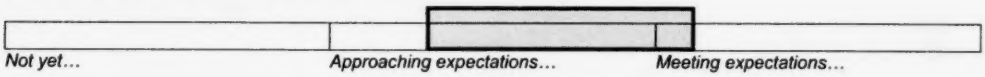
   - The district does not have clear and concise goals focused on student achievement.
   - Most school goals are focused on student achievement, and were either based on relevant evidence or previous accreditation growth plans.
   - Schools are continuing to refine and clarify their goals.

2. *Rationale:*
   Improving districts have a thorough and connected set of reasons based on evidence for the selection of their student achievement goals.



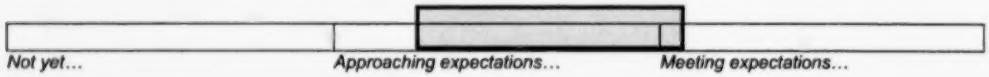
   - Due to the lack of district goals, the decentralized structure of the district, and the autonomy given to the schools, the district has no district rationale.
   - Schools were able to articulate clearly the rationale for their student achievement goals.

3. *Data:*
   Improving districts are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school and district / provincial data. The analysis of this evidence has informed the selection of the district goals.



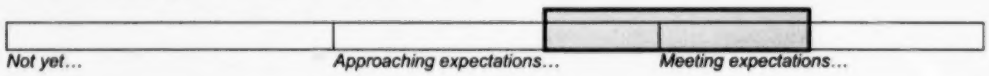
   - There is a growing recognition of the importance and usefulness of achievement data in developing student achievement goals.
   - A significant amount of the data collected is useful in establishing comparative district benchmarks, however it is not useful in driving instructional practice.
   - Some schools recognize the need to further expand their use of student achievement data to track their progress.

4. *Strategies:*
   Improving districts have a well-organized, focused improvement plan in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



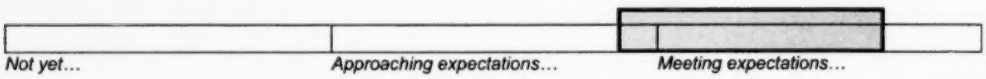
   - Generally, schools have included very appropriate instructional strategies related to their school plans.
   - The team did not observe much sharing of best practice strategies between schools.
   - The August pro-d days are an opportunity to share some of the great things the team observed in the schools.

5. *Structures:*
   Improving districts have aligned structures – resources, time, and organizations – to get the results they want. This includes effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



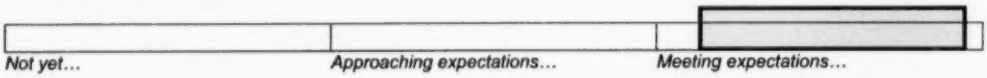
   - The community integrated services model is a wonderful initiative of the district to bring resources into schools to meet children's needs.
   - The use of community volunteers as a resource to support achievement goals is another good example of the co-operation of all partner groups to put children first.
   - The use of the Early Development Instrument to guide the allocation of resources to schools is commendable.
   - The change in configuration of Greenwood Elementary and Midway Elementary is an example of the creative use of resources to enhance student learning.
   - The district support of Child Care, Preschool Fairs, and playschools are examples of aligning district and community structures.

6. *Results:*
   Improving districts get improved student learning results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



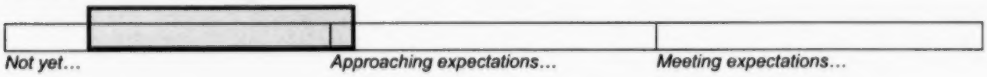
   - Strong results are evident in FSA and provincial exam scores.
   - Further refinement needs to be done on establishing performance targets and trend data, particularly related to classroom-based assessment.

7. *Communication:*
   Improving districts communicate and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made.



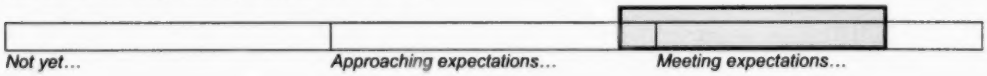
   - The team consistently heard positive comments about the openness and accessibility of the superintendent, trustees, administrators, and teachers.
   - Schools have made excellent efforts to engage their communities in their school improvement plans.

8. *Teamwork*: District and School Coherence
   Improving districts have a dynamic and interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school district directions are both valued.



   - Due to the lack of clarity of district goals and the decentralized philosophy of the district, there appears to be a lack of co-ordination between school and district priorities.
   - The district is well positioned and ready to move forward in increasing its focus on a few concise goals and in providing for their co-ordination.

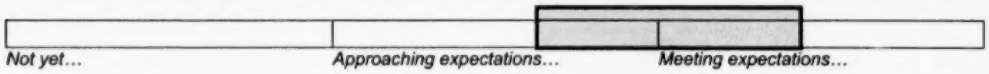
9. *Teamwork*: District and Parent Involvement
   Improving districts work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, on improving student learning.



   - There are many examples of shared leadership and decision-making with parents.
   - The district is facilitating the implementation of SPCs, and can capitalize on the strong parent support for attaining student achievement goals.
   - The district should be commended for fostering an environment in which children's best interests are foremost.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:*

Improving districts are led by district leaders with a clear vision for and commitment to school improvement and improving student achievement. Principals, vice principals, teacher, parent and student leadership is encouraged and systematically developed – with a focus on improving student learning.



- The district needs to clarify and coordinate the implementation of its goals.
- The district has created an expectation for strong school-based leadership and it is recognized and appreciated in the community.
- There are some fine examples of leadership in the district. The Team suggests that the district identify these leaders - teachers, administrators, and parents - to assist in building greater capacity in the district.

Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths related to student achievement.

- The district and the community work together to put kids first.
- The district has created a climate for creative problem solving to deal with the challenges it faces.
- The district has an atmosphere of clear and open communication at all levels. This extends to opportunities for shared leadership and decision-making by parents.
- A positive environment for autonomous school based decision-making is clearly evident.
- The leadership provided by the district to implement the community integrated services model, which supports success for at-risk students, is commendable.
- The district is achieving positive results on provincial measures.

Promising Practices

District or school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus.

- The Preschool Fair – screening of vision, hearing, language, speech, and ABC and Me (book for preschool kids) - is an encouraging initiative.
- The Community Integrated Services model, which brings community resources into the school to support student success.

Recommendations

Team recommendations for strengthening school and district focus on student achievement and for improving results.

- The district should consider establishing a few (two or three) clear and concise goals focused on student achievement.
- The district should consider how they could involve parents in developing the district goals.
- The district should consider creating a structure for the coordination and support of district goals. The district would benefit from schools sharing their strategies, based on best practice, that pertain to common goals.
- The district should consider developing a process to ensure district-wide consistency in data collection at the district, school, and classroom level. The district should continue to encourage the use of performance standards in literacy, numeracy, and social responsibility.

Follow Up (to be determined by Ministry of Education)

Required follow up with specific time frame may take the form of:

- Ministry phone call
- Deputy Minister visit
- District report to the Ministry
- Review of the next year's district contract
- Special Advisor appointment